Program Overview and Instructions

County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH)
Vector Habitat Remediation Program Funding
(FY 2013/14)

Background

The County of San Diego's (County's) Vector Control Program (VCP) is an existing public health program that was implemented to monitor and control mosquitoes and other disease-carrying insects and rodents in San Diego County. The VCP also includes regularly testing for diseases that are spread by mosquitoes, other insects, and rodents. The VCP has provided mosquito and vector control services for over 30 years, and is managed by the County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) and governed by the County Board of Supervisors (Board).

Until 2005-06, the VCP was primarily funded by a service charge paid by all property owners within San Diego County. This service charge was established in 1989 and was decreased in the 1990s when reserves had accumulated. However, those reserves were subsequently depleted due to inflation and an increase in the costs of protecting people and animals/wildlife from the West Nile virus, a disease spread by mosquitoes. Additional funding resources were needed to restore basic VCP services, and to continue mosquito and West Nile virus prevention efforts at the necessary enhanced level of protection.

Also, during the 1990s, effective maintenance and restoration of mosquito breeding habitat (such as wetlands or other areas containing habitat for protected species) became more difficult to manage due to increased concerns regarding the protection of sensitive habitats and protected species. In addition, decreased water flows and increased vegetation in these areas made other mosquito-abatement techniques less effective.

In 2005, a ballot measure was presented to the public allowing property owners to decide whether the VCP should receive additional funding to support mosquito, vector, and disease control services. Property owners were advised that a portion of the money raised by this measure would be used for a vector habitat remediation program that would implement long-term solutions for controlling mosquito breeding habitat. This measure was approved by the public. The revenues from the measure now help to fund year-round mosquito control and enhanced disease prevention services, including year-round testing for, and response to, diseases that are carried by mosquitoes, other insects, and rodents. One of these diseases is the West Nile virus. When breeding sources cannot be removed due to issues such as lack of access or potential for impacts on sensitive resources, the VCP uses natural materials found to be environmentally safe and endorsed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the University of California, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For mosquito breeding habitat such as ponds and marshes, the VCP uses natural bacteria that target the mosquito

larvae before they hatch. However, current programs are not as effective as they need to be, because many vector breeding habitats need longer-term solutions.

The Vector Habitat Remediation Program (Program) is one of the primary VCP tools to address these situations. Under this Program, accumulated and future funds from the assessment approved by the 2005 ballot measure are being used to implement mosquito breeding habitat remediation projects throughout San Diego County, within both developed and natural areas. Within wetlands, a primary goal of the Program is to eliminate or reduce breeding habitat in a manner that balances the water quality, biologic, aesthetic, and hydrologic values of wetlands with the need to protect human populations and animals from mosquito-borne disease. In many settings, management and design measures that bring the ecology of the wetland back into balance will also help to eliminate or reduce mosquito breeding habitat.

Under this Program, DEH will provide funding to government and private entities to implement vegetation removal, wetland enhancement, and other related projects that will reduce or remove mosquito breeding habitat. Projects implemented under the Program will be funded or partially funded by DEH through either (1) direct agreements with landowners as needs are identified for smaller projects or (2) a competitive grant program with an annual or more frequent award cycle for larger projects. This notice is to solicit applications for projects to be funded under the Competitive Grant Program. Projects that provide the most significant reductions in risks from mosquito-borne disease per dollar spent will be favored in making funding decisions for competitive proposals.

Known Breeding Locations

Only projects that address known mosquito breeding locations will be considered for funding under this Program. As part of the VCP, DEH has identified known breeding locations where regular treatment is necessary to control mosquito population. Applicants should contact DEH (or (858) 495-5358) to determine if their project location is a known breeding location.

Eligible Projects

Projects funded under the competitive grant program will generally focus on comprehensive solutions for source reduction of mosquito breeding habitat through physical modification in mosquito breeding problem areas. These projects may involve a variety of activities, such as modifying tidal flow in lagoons, management of stream discharge, manipulation of stormwater retention time, vegetation removal, and wetland restoration/redesign. A brief description of the types of activities that might fall within each of these broad categories is provided below:

> *Wetland Design* – The overall objective of wetland design projects will generally be to reduce or eliminate areas of shallow, standing water where mosquitoes successfully reproduce. Such projects will typically involve changes in a wetland's physical characteristics to provide steep edges, maximize the area of deep open water pools, create surface connections between pools, encourage wave action and circulation, and provide habitat for mosquito-eating fish.
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> *Water Management* – Water management activities aimed at elimination or reduction of mosquito breeding habitat often involve rapid flooding and drawdown, reduced residence time for shallow water, and increased water agitation and wave action.

Vegetation Manipulation – Vegetation management activities for mosquito control generally involve removal of dense vegetation within pools, leaving only narrow strips of vegetation along wetland margins.

Projects funded under this Program will be characterized as either (1) turnkey projects, (2) study projects, or (3) assistance projects.

1. **Turnkey Projects**
   Turnkey projects will be ready to go as soon as they are funded. For a project to qualify as a turnkey project, the vector habitat remediation activity must be fully planned, environmental reviews in accordance with CEQA must be completed, and permits must be obtained prior to submitting the application. Turnkey projects will vary in scope and complexity.

2. **Study Projects**
   Study projects will include planning and permitting activities necessary prior to project implementation. These projects will be aimed at developing specific vector habitat remediation plans, consulting with pertinent regulatory agencies, and obtaining permits required prior to project implementation. Activities may include site planning, engineering design work, preparation of environmental documents, and permit application. The goal of the study projects is to complete all background planning and permitting work so that they can move forward as turnkey projects in a subsequent funding cycle.

3. **Assistance Projects**
   Projects that request County involvement for assistance with permitting, mediation in discussion with regulatory agencies, developing project plans, and other related types of activities will be identified as assistance projects. Typically, this type of project will occur when an entity needs the County to function as the lead agency for CEQA review. For assistance projects, a portion of the allocated funding would be used to cover the costs of the County's role.

The County will accept proposals only for sites within San Diego County, including within incorporated cities. Federal, Tribal, and other lands that do not pay the assessments that fund this program are excluded. Proposals may be submitted by property owners, designated land managers, or other entities or individuals authorized by the owner or land manager.

Owners should submit documentary evidence of ownership. Land managers should submit a copy of the conservation easement or other document showing their authority and responsibility to manage the land. Other applicants should submit documents to establish the identity of the land owner or the identity and authority of the land managers, and to show authorization by that owner or land manager to conduct work of the kind proposed on the property at issue. In addition, documentation must be provided that any individual signing a proposal on behalf of a legal entity has been authorized by the relevant entity to enter into a grant agreement with the County to perform the proposed work if a grant is awarded. The County shall be the sole judge of whether submitted documentation is sufficient, and may request that additional documentation be provided at any time during the grant award process.

Regulatory Compliance and Permitting

The County is committed to ensuring all projects funded under the Program will be carried out in a manner that complies with land use regulations and applicable local, state, and federal wetland and endangered species regulations, and that minimizes adverse effects on protected species and habitats. Projects will be screened on the basis of whether or not they would: (1) establish optimal performance to reduce mosquito breeding habitat; (2) comply with environmental and land use regulations; (3) result in a net loss of wetland functions and values; and (4) result in significant impacts on sensitive habitat. Grant applicants will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and obtaining the necessary permits applicable to their own project(s).

The County has taken the following actions that may assist applicants in regulatory compliance:

- **Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)**. A PEIR was certified by the County Board of Supervisors in March 2010 to address potential environmental effects of the Program. The PEIR addressed typical types of projects and environmental impacts that may occur as part of the Program. Depending upon the nature and type of project proposed by a grant applicant, it may be possible for the applicant to address CEQA compliance by 'tiering' off of the PEIR in accordance with Section 15152 of the CEQA Guidelines. Applicants can determine whether a project can tier off the PEIR by reviewing the project in light of Sections 15162 – 15164 of the CEQA Guidelines. County staff will be available to assist applicants to determine whether or not the work they plan to propose can be covered under the PEIR and the extent that additional project specific CEQA compliance is required. **Note: It is the responsibility of the applicant to clearly demonstrate how CEQA compliance will be completed and should not assume their project is automatically covered under the PEIR**. When it is disclosed that individual projects will result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant impacts, additional mitigation measures will be required and implemented by the grant applicant.

- **Resource Agency Umbrella Permits**. The County has established a Master Streambed Alteration Agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), a Programmatic Water Quality Certification with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) – San Diego Region, and a Regional General Permit with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE). Proposed projects meeting the outlined criteria below may be eligible for coverage under these permits. The grant applicant should coordinate with County staff to determine if these permits are applicable to their proposed project. If all of these criteria cannot be met, then the grant applicant will be required to obtain project specific permits from applicable resource agencies.

  Projects must meet the following criteria **to be eligible for the umbrella permits**:

  - Project must be located solely within the jurisdiction of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board – San Diego Region (i.e. Region 9).
  - Project cannot be located within Federal lands (including tribal lands and military installations).
  - Project cannot be located with the jurisdiction of the California Coastal Commission (i.e. within coastal zone as defined by Coastal Zone Management Act).
  - Project cannot permanently impact more than 0.10 acre and 300 linear feet of jurisdictional waters.

- Project must be constructed between September 16 – February 14 to avoid impacts to nesting birds.
- Project cannot impact threatened or endangered species, or adversely modify designated (or proposed) critical habitat.
- Project cannot impact vernal complexes (including pools, swales, or road ruts), cismontane alkali marsh, salt marsh, brackish marsh, oak trees (no equipment allowed within drip line), or other native trees that have a diameter at breast height of greater than 2 inches.
- No activities are allowed that include replacement or repairs to existing hardscape drainage facilities or expansion of such facilities.
- If project requires sediment removal, it must be less than 2,000 cubic yards of accumulated sediment (removed material must be deposited at approved upland disposal site).

Available Funding

Multiple projects will be funded under this Grant Program in FY 2013/14. An individual project cannot exceed $500,000 during this funding period.

Process for Reviewing Proposals

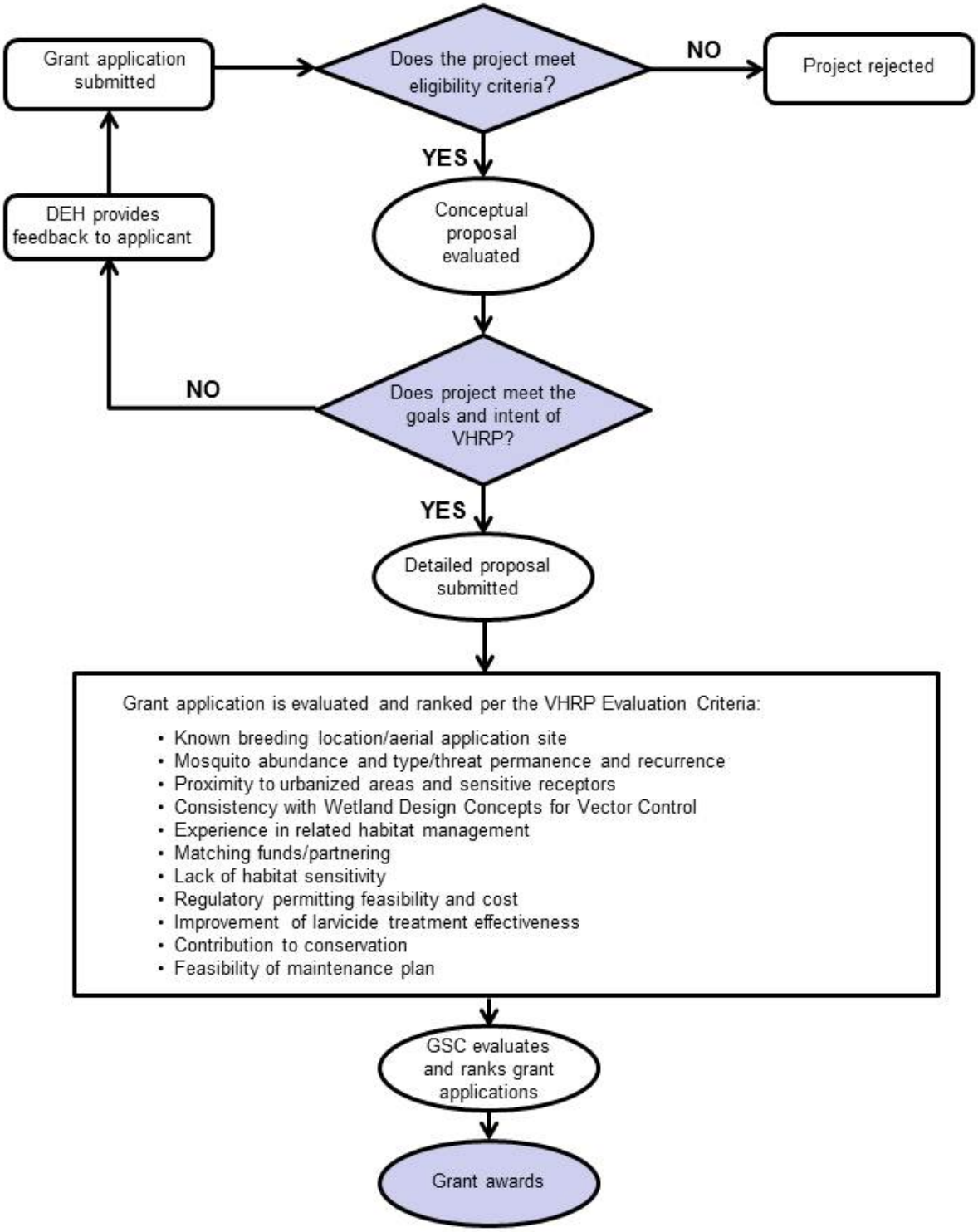
Proposals under the Competitive Grant Program will be evaluated using the following steps (see Exhibit 1):

1. Conceptual Proposal – The grant applicant will have the **option** to submit an application (see Attachment 2) and short conceptual proposal for review and feedback by the County. Project applicants are not required to submit a conceptual proposal and can instead submit a detailed proposal directly. The conceptual proposal will involve the preparation of a short description and the basic elements of the proposed project. The grant applicant will not need to prepare a detailed technical approach and cost estimate as part of the conceptual proposal. The County will conduct an initial screening of the conceptual proposals to determine if the proposed project meets the basic eligibility requirements of the Program. The County will provide feedback on the conceptual proposals as input to the grant applicants on how to move forward into the detailed proposal stage.

2. Detailed Proposal – Using input from the conceptual proposal phase, the grant applicant will prepare and submit a more detailed proposal with technical approach and cost estimate. Project applicants are not required to submit a conceptual proposal and can submit a detailed proposal directly.

3. Proposal Ranking and Selection – The County will appoint a Grant Selection Committee (GSC) (referred to as Advisory Panel in Program EIR) that will consist of County staff and outside experts. The GSC will evaluate and rank each proposal based on the Evaluation Criteria in Exhibit A. Projects will be selected based on the evaluation results, financial requirements, project feasibility, and the best use of public funds. Selected applicants will be invited to enter into a grant agreement with the County for funding. Applicants who receive grant funding will be required to submit quarterly progress reports and a final summary report detailing project actions and assessing the project's effects on mosquito breeding.

Exhibit 1. VHRP Grant Selection Process



Eligibility Criteria

Grant applications will initially be evaluated to determine if they meet the basic eligibility criteria for this Program, including:

- ✓ Project location is a known mosquito breeding location or can be documented as a mosquito breeding source where regular treatment is necessary to control mosquito population.
- ✓ Proposed project actions will result in a measurable reduction of mosquito breeding.
- ✓ Project is located within San Diego County, including incorporated cities. Federal, Tribal, and other lands that do not pay the assessments that fund this Program are excluded.
- ✓ Applicant has provided documentary evidence of ownership and/or authority and responsibility to manage property.
- ✓ Applicant has demonstrated that they will comply with land use regulations and applicable local, state, and federal wetlands and endangered species regulations.

If a grant application does not meet any of the eligibility requirements, it will be rejected and returned to the applicant.

Evaluation Criteria

The GSC will evaluate and rank each grant application using the evaluation criteria included in Exhibit A at the end of this Attachment.

Submittal Requirements and Application Deadline

Conceptual proposals shall include:

- ✓ Grant Submission Form (Attachment 2) – completed and signed using PDF form (the PDF form is editable using standard Acrobat Reader).
- ✓ Conceptual Proposals (no more than 10 pages) with the following sections:
  - o Project Purpose and Overview
  - o Overview of Approach
  - o Estimated Budget
  - o Estimated Project Schedule
- ✓ CEQA and other permitting documentation

Detailed proposals shall include:

- ✓ Grant Submission Form (Attachment 2) – completed and signed. Needs to be completed and signed again even if already done for conceptual proposal.
- ✓ Detailed Proposals (no more than 25 pages) with the following sections:
  - o Project Purpose and Overview
  - o Technical Approach (including discussion of long-term maintenance)
  - o Project Budget (itemized by task as outlined in Technical Approach)
  - o Project Schedule (itemized by task as outlined in Technical Approach)
- ✓ CEQA and other permitting documentation (if not already provided as part of conceptual proposal)

The grant applicant will submit proposal(s) in electronic format as a single PDF file. If electronic file size of proposal is less than 4MB, the proposal can be emailed to Gregory.Slawson@sdcounty.ca.gov. If electronic files are larger than 4MB, the proposal should be copied onto a CD-ROM and delivered to:

Greg Slawson, Sr. Vector Ecologist
County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health
5570 Overland Avenue, Suite 102
San Diego, CA 92123

Conceptual proposals (optional) must be received no later than 4 pm PST on June 28, 2013.

Detailed proposals must be received no later than 4 pm PST on August 5, 2013.

Late proposals will not be accepted.

Schedule for Grant Selection and Award

May 21, 2013 – A call for conceptual proposals will be published by:

1. Posting on the County Buynet website.
2. Posting on DEH website.
3. Written notices to potential sources on mailing lists.
4. Notice to potential sources from registers, internet searches, and telephone directories.

June 28, 2013 – Conceptual proposals due.

July 12, 2013 – County will provide written responses on conceptual proposals.

August 5, 2013 – Detailed proposals due.

September 13, 2013 - The GSC will complete the review and ranking of grant applications following criteria in Exhibit A. Applicants will be notified of the results.

November 1, 2013 – Grants awarded.

Debrief and Protest Procedures

When a grant applicant has been notified, in writing, by the Grant Administrator that their proposal is no longer being considered for award, the grant applicant may request a "debriefing" from the County on the findings about that one proposal (with no comparative information about proposals submitted by others). After grant award, any interested party may make an appointment to review the files to look at all Proposals, the Grant Selection Committee Report and any other information in the file. Copies of any documents desired by the reviewer will be prepared and sold to the requestor at current County prices for reproduction of materials.

The primary objective of the County's Grant award process is to assure that grants are awarded which are determined to be most beneficial to the goals of this program, reduction of chronic mosquito breeding, cost and other factors considered. On occasion, a grant applicant in the award process may

protest an award. The following requirements and procedures are set forth to guide the protest process:

1. Standing to Protest - Protests shall be filed only by a grant applicant or authorized representative, in writing. The written protest shall be filed with the Grant Administrator. A form will be provided as part of the notification of non-award mailing.

2. Grounds for Protest - Protests shall be based only upon one or both of the following grounds:

a. The County failed to follow the procedures and adhere to requirements set forth in the solicitation or any addendum thereto.

b. The Protestor alleges misconduct or impropriety by County officials or grant selection committee (GSC).

3. Time for Filing a Protest - A protest shall be filed by a grant applicant or authorized representative within five working days of the posting of the notice of selected grants on the County DEH website.

4. Required Form of Protest

a. All protests shall be made in writing, using the form which will be provided with the written notification of non-award and available on the Department of Environmental Health website, containing the information listed below, and shall be filed with the Grant Administrator identified in the solicitation package.

1. The name, address, telephone and facsimile numbers of the protestor;

2. The signature of the grant applicant or representative;

3. Identification of the ground or grounds of protest set forth above in Section 2, "Grounds for Protest," with supporting facts and documentation;

4. All information establishing that the protestor is a grant applicant for the purpose of filing a protest; and

5. The form of relief requested.

b. Protest submissions should be concise and logically arranged, but no formal briefs or other technical forms of pleading or motion are required. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, the solicitation documents and addendum, correspondence, and declarations.

5. Informal Resolution Process – Within five days the GSC will attempt to resolve protests to the satisfaction of all parties prior to forwarding to the Director of Environmental Health (Director). The Grant Administrator will notify interested parties if the protest is resolved informally.

6. Summary Dismissal of Protest - The Director may summarily dismiss a protest, or specific protest allegations, at any time that the Director determines the protest raises issues beyond the scope of this protest procedure as set forth above in Section 2, "Grounds for Protest;" is untimely, frivolous, or without merit; is not submitted in the required form of protest, as set forth above in Section 4, "Required Form of Protest;" or is submitted by a non-grant applicant or authorized representative. In such cases, a notice of summary dismissal will be furnished to the interested parties.

7. Decision by the Director Based on Written Submissions Only - In reaching a decision on the merits of a protest, the Director may consider relevant documentation submitted by the protestor. If the Director wishes to have additional information submitted by the protestor that was not included in the protest or documentation from other interested parties, the Director will make a request specifying the information sought and time for submittal. Submissions of additional information that have not been specifically requested by the Director will not be considered. The Director will not conduct a "hearing" nor consider oral testimony. The Director will issue a written decision containing the basis of the decision within 30 days after a protest has been filed with the Director; however, the time for decision may be extended by the Director. If the Director requests additional documentation from the protestor or other interested parties, an additional 15 days will automatically be added to the time for decision. A copy of the decision will be furnished to interested parties. The decision shall be final with no provision for reconsideration.

8. Decision by the Director Following Discretionary Oral Presentation - In the sole discretion of the Director, the Director may elect to provide an opportunity for the protestor to make an oral presentation pertaining to the protest. Oral presentations shall be conducted in accordance with the following procedure:

a. Notice of Oral Presentation - The Director will set a date, time, and place for an oral presentation. Written notice will be provided to interested parties not less than five calendar days in advance of the oral presentation unless it is agreeable to all parties that an earlier date be established. Continuances may be granted by the Director for good cause.

b. Guidelines for Oral Presentation - Oral presentations are informal in nature and shall be made by the protestor or its authorized representative. The Director will determine how the oral presentations will be conducted and set time limits for the presentation. The Director may allow the protestor to comment on the written documentation and argue its position. The Director may request additional documentation prior to or during the oral presentation. Unless requested, additional documentation shall not be accepted. Witnesses shall not be called. Technical rules of evidence shall not apply. The Director may question interested parties or provide an opportunity for interested parties to make an oral presentation.

c. Record of Oral Presentation - Any interested party may request, and in the Director‘s sole discretion, the Director may approve or disapprove recording of the presentation. If the Director allows the presentation to be recorded, the interested party requesting that the presentation be recorded must pay the cost of recording, including the cost to

distribute copies of the recording to the Director and other interested parties. There shall be no cost to the County.

d. Decisions - The Director will issue a written decision within 30 days of the oral presentation; however, the time for decision may be extended by the Director. A copy of the decision will be furnished to interested parties. The decision will be final with no provision for reconsideration.

9. Scope of Decision - The scope of the Director's decision shall be limited to whether one or more of the two grounds for protest set forth above in Section 2, "Grounds for Protest," was sustained or denied.

10. Protest Remedies - If the Director sustains a protest in whole or in part, the Director shall have the sole discretion to determine an appropriate remedy.

Exhibit A - Vector Habitat Remediation Program Evaluation Criteria

Proposals for competitive grants will be evaluated based on the following evaluation criteria:

- Known breeding location/aerial application site
- Mosquito abundance and type/threat permanence and recurrence
- Proximity to urbanized areas and sensitive receptors
- Consistency with Wetland Design Concepts for Vector Control
- Experience in related habitat management
- Matching funds/partnering
- Lack of habitat sensitivity
- Regulatory permitting feasibility and cost
- Improvement of larvicide treatment effectiveness
- Contribution to conservation
- Feasibility of maintenance plan

Projects will be selected based on the evaluation results, financial requirements, project feasibility, and the best use of public funds. Selected applicants will be invited to enter into a grant agreement with DEH for grant funding. Applicants that receive grant funding will be required to submit progress reports with each invoice and a final summary report detailing project actions and assessing the project's effect on mosquito breeding.

Known breeding location / aerial application site

The rationale behind this criterion is to ensure that funded projects target locations with a demonstrated mosquito population. In other words, it is important that projects implemented as part of the Vector Habitat Remediation Program (Program) focus on areas where there is a known vector problem.

As part of ongoing monitoring activities, DEH has identified known mosquito breeding locations, and these areas are treated as necessary using larvicide or other environmentally-friendly controls on a regular basis. In addition, DEH uses aerial application techniques in several areas that present difficult access and coverage issues. Projects proposed to occur within these areas known to possess mosquito breeding habitat will be ranked higher than projects that will not occur in documented problem areas.

Grant applicants must provide information on the project location, such as parcel numbers, coordinates, and a location map. Subsequently, DEH staff will be responsible for comparing the proposed project location with the known breeding locations to develop a score for this criterion.

Mosquito abundance and type / threat permanence and recurrence

There are 24 different types of mosquitoes in San Diego County. At least four types are known to carry diseases that can be passed to humans. The most common diseases carried by mosquitoes in San Diego County are encephalitis viruses and malaria. Encephalitis viruses like West Nile Virus affect the central nervous system. Malaria is a blood parasite that can cause chills, high fever, anemia, kidney damage, or brain damage.

The rationale behind this criterion is to ensure that projects funded under this program focus on eradicating mosquito species known to carry diseases that pose a threat to humans. Therefore, proposed project sites known to have a higher abundance of mosquito species known to represent a

public health risk will receive a relatively high score in this category. In addition, sites that are consistently a threat and/or require a greater frequency of treatment by DEH will be ranked higher.

Grant applicants will provide information on the project location and site characteristics. Subsequently, DEH staff will be responsible for comparing the project location against the surveillance database, conducting field data collections, and/or assessing species found on the site using their professional judgment.

Proximity to urbanized areas and sensitive receptors

The proximity of a mosquito breeding habitat to urbanized areas directly affects the likelihood that mosquitoes from that area could pose a public health threat. In short, the closer a given mosquito habitat is to populated areas the greater the opportunity for disease transmission to occur. In addition, it has been demonstrated that individuals over the age of 50, those with diabetes, those with high blood pressure, and those with compromised immune systems are at the highest risk of developing serious complications from West Nile Virus. Therefore, the Program will favor projects proposed to occur in relatively close proximity to homes and institutions used by significant numbers of people that are most sensitive to the disease.

The project site's proximity to urbanized areas will be assessed by overlaying a 2-mile buffer polygon around the project site on top of the SANDAG existing land use map. A relative score for the amount of urbanization within the buffer zone will be generated from GIS. In addition, the grant applicant will provide information of sensitive receptors (parks, schools, outdoor theatres, etc.) located in the vicinity.

Consistency with Wetland Design Concepts for Vector Control

The *Wetland Design Concepts for Vector Control* document can be found in Appendix A of the Vector Habitat Remediation Program Implementation Plan (posted on DEH website (http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/pdf/VHRP_Implementation_Plan.pdf). In summary this document summarizes wetland design concepts, water management techniques, and vegetation manipulation that can be undertaken to reduce or eliminate mosquito breeding habitat within wetlands, effluent treatment ponds, and stormwater treatment infrastructure.

The techniques discussed include, but are not limited to: (1) reduction or elimination of shallow, standing water, (2) use of steep edges along pool margins, (3) creation of deep, open water pools, (4) creation of surface connections between pools, (5) promotion of wave action and circulation, (6) incorporation of habitat for mosquito-eating fish, (7) rapid flooding and drawdown, and (8) removal of dense vegetation within pools, leaving only narrow strips of vegetation along wetland margins.

The grant applicant will provide a description of the proposed project actions and design. DEH staff will evaluate proposed projects for consistency with wetland design and management concepts known to facilitate vector control. It should be noted that this evaluation will apply to the project site and any off-site compensatory mitigation associated with the project.

Experience in related habitat management

It is anticipated that project proponents with experience managing wetlands, effluent treatment ponds, and stormwater facilities will have an increased chance of successfully implementing vector habitat remediation projects. This is especially true of individuals or groups that have a proven track record of managing such systems in a manner that reduces mosquito breeding habitat.

Grant applicants will be required to provide a description of their experience (or their consultant's experience) in implementing the type of habitat management activities proposed in their project. Organizations with a track record of successful implementation of projects will be ranked higher than those that do not have such a track record.

Matching funds / partnering

Projects that have additional funding sources will be looked upon favorably. In short, if Program dollars are matched by money from outside sources it is anticipated that a heightened amount of work aimed at controlling mosquito populations can be carried out. Therefore, project proponents will be required to include the percentage of requested Program funding that will be matched by other public or private sources, including other 3rd party government funding, non-governmental organization (NGO) grants, and private funds.

Lack of habitat sensitivity

Generally, projects in areas that possess sensitive habitats and species are expected to be more complicated and less cost-effective. In summary, projects that will impact sensitive habitats will require more extensive environmental review and permits and entail more regulatory oversight than projects that avoid such impacts. Furthermore, projects that occur within sensitive habitats are more likely to result in adverse ecological effects and require substantial mitigation. Both of these issues can add substantial expenses and time constraints to a project.

Therefore, projects involving rare or sensitive habitats will be given a lower score for this criterion. Projects involving modification of low quality or disturbed habitats, common upland habitats, and heavily managed artificial ponds and basins will be favored because of lesser resource sensitivity to management activities.

Regulatory permitting feasibility and cost

Regulatory permitting can add complexity, expense, and uncertainty to a project. Projects that require environmental permits are subject to the review and discretion of multiple regulatory agencies. The need to address the concerns and constraints of each agency often adds complexity to a project. This in turn adds expense, because time and resources must be used to apply for permits, respond to agency concerns, and adapt plans if needed. In addition, the need to obtain permits adds a layer of uncertainty to projects, because often in the permitting process there is no guarantee that the proposed work will be approved by each regulatory agency involved.

Project applications will be evaluated for: (1) the expected time needed to complete the regulatory permitting process, (2) the expected permitting fees and other funds needed to acquire regulatory permits, and (3) the project's consistency with regulatory requirements and likelihood of obtaining approval.

Improvement of larvicide treatment effectiveness

Some types of projects have the potential to enhance the effectiveness of ongoing larvicide treatments. For example, projects that remove dense vegetation from shallow, stagnant waters can allow greater access for applicators and facilitate dispersion of treatment materials. Therefore, each proposed project will be evaluated to assess the extent to which it will increase efficiency or effectiveness of DEH's routine treatment activities.

Contribution to conservation

It is important that projects funded under the Program do not result in loss of wetland functions and values. Therefore, projects that contribute to conservation will be assessed favorably under this criterion. More specifically, each project will be judged to assess its consistency with the goals and objectives of local conservation plans, programs, and policies. Furthermore, each project's overall contribution to the amount and type of habitat protected via some form of conservation mechanism will be assessed. It is important to note that all projects must be consistent with the no-net-loss wetland policies of federal, state, and local agencies.

Feasibility of maintenance plan

This Program seeks to promote projects that will be lasting in nature. In other words, the desired result is sustained reduction in mosquito breeding. Generally, the long-term effectiveness of a project will depend on incorporation of a comprehensive maintenance plan.

To this end, grant applicants will be required to provide a description of the proposed long-term maintenance plan (including detailed descriptions of maintenance activities, schedule, and funding). Subsequently, each project will be judged regarding the likelihood that the proposed long-term maintenance will ensure continued effectiveness of the vector habitat remediation activity.